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## Section 16

# FEDERAL WATER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This section describes past, present and expected future involvement of federal agencies in Bear River Basin water planning and development.

### 16.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the state of Utah has taken a more active role in the planning and development of local and regional water resources. In general, the federal role has been more dominant in the past, but the state is expected to prevail in the future. Federal financial assistance for a major water development is possible but less likely today than in previous years.<sup>1&3</sup> The cooperative participation of federal agencies, however, will continue to be very helpful to the state. Several federal agencies have major responsibilities for management and regulatory activities that are expected to continue indefinitely.

### 16.2 FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE BASIN

Several federal agencies are actively involved in Bear River Basin planning, and several have been involved for many years in planning and development. The U. S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have completed basin-wide investigations, and

the three basin states (Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho) have completed numerous studies in connection with developing their state water plans. All of this has provided considerable information on the resources of the basin and, in some cases, alternative water development plans.

The Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), Corps of Engineers (Corps), Soil Conservation Service (SCS), Geological Survey (USGS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Forest Service (FS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM), have been involved in studies or currently manage resources in the basin. The first two agencies are primarily development



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oriented, with emphasis on relatively large projects, programs or areas. For the most part, SCS developments must be authorized by the U.S. Congress and sponsored by a state or local entity. The SCS has been, and continues to be, a service agency providing technical and financial assistance to the agriculture industry. The SCS projects do not need congressional approval. The USGS is mainly a data collection and research agency. The EPA has regulatory responsibilities, particularly in water quality. The FWS has jurisdiction over the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, in addition to responsibilities concerning threatened and endangered species. The FEMA provides flood insurance under a national program, and assists with repairing damages when they occur. The FS, BLM, and other federal agencies are involved with federal land or other resources which they each administer. The FS manages approximately 461,000 acres, and the BLM about 187,000 acres (See Figure 7-1).

Hyrum Dam on the Little Bear River, and Newton Dam, on Newton Creek, were designed and built by the USBR many years ago. They are operated and maintained by the South Cache Water Users Association and the Newton Water Users Association, respectively, but are still owned by the United States.

Extensive farm irrigation improvements in the Bear River Basin have been designed and built by the SCS in cooperation with other agencies and private local entities. A water quality improvement project for the control of non-point source pollution is underway on the Little Bear River, in cooperation with the Utah Departments of Environmental Quality and Agriculture. In addition, valuable hydrologic and agricultural data have been collected in previous basin investigations and are available for use.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's water and water-related programs provide cost sharing and technical assistance. Cost sharing for individual and group irrigation facilities are

provided through the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, grants and loans from the Farmers Home Administration, and technical assistance and grants provided by the SCS (See Tables 8-2 and 8-3).

The Bear River Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program, sponsored by local government units, with technical and administrative support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture/SCS, has been involved in water development in the basin for many years. This is a cooperative program, with participation and funding provided from federal, state, and local sources, and with coordination essentially at the local level. A variety of projects and studies are supported by the RC&D Program.

In addition to the FWS, other federal agencies responsible for managing fish and wildlife resources in Rich, Cache, and Box Elder counties include the FS and the BLM.



The Corps of Engineers conducted a reconnaissance study in 1989 to determine if

new reservoirs for flood control and related purposes were economically and environmentally justified. The report concluded that federal flood damage reduction projects were not implemented in the Bear River Basin because benefits were insufficient to qualify for Corps participation.<sup>3</sup>

### **16.3 PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT**

Federal programs most significant to the Bear River Basin in the immediate future are: (1) the EPA's authority under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act, (2) FWS plans for rehabilitation and management of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, and (3) at least eight ongoing farm programs of the Department of Agriculture.

Further comprehensive federal studies in the Bear River Basin and/or participation by the USBR, Corps, or SCS in future development would be welcomed, but neither appears to be likely at present. Should such participation happen, some form of cooperative cost sharing could significantly benefit basin residents and the state.

Undetermined water supply improvement for the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is expected to be part of any major lower basin water development project. Special studies and discussions with the FWS are expected to be the means of determining the type and extent of improvement to be provided. The FWS has expressed its wish to continue working with the state throughout the planning and implementation stages of development. As part of a nationwide agreement, the USBR is working with the FWS on water supply improvements for the bird refuge. The USBR has expressed a desire also to assist the state of Utah in the planning and development of the Bear River. The USBR and Division of Water Resources completed a joint water management study in 1990, that includes the Bear River Basin.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to rehabilitation and continued operation of the federal bird refuge, the FWS has other responsibilities mandated by the U.S. Congress. Two of the most significant laws are the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Endangered Species Act.

### **16.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Division of Water Resources and other state and local entities should continue to cooperate with federal agencies in planning, designing, funding, constructing, and operating of new and existing water supply projects in the Bear River Basin.

### **16.5 REFERENCES**

In addition to references listed below, attention is directed to Section 16 of the Utah State Water Plan, January 1990, where a more detailed perspective is given of federal agencies with major water resources planning and development authority and responsibility.

1. "Assessment '87, A New Direction for the Bureau of Reclamation," USBR, September 1987.
2. "Summary Report, Water and Related Land Resources," Bear River Cooperative Study, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1978.
3. "Bear River Basin Investigation," Reconnaissance Report, U.S. Corps of Engineers, February 1989. Revised December 1989.
4. "Wasatch Front Total Water Management Study" Final Report, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Utah Division of Water Resources, February 1990.
5. "Bear River Investigations," Status Report, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, June 1970.